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QUESTION OF PALESTINE

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-ninth year

Letter dated 28 February 1994 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of a statement made on 26 February 1994 by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, Senator Gareth Evans, on the massacre of Palestinians in Hebron (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, under agenda items 34 and 35, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Richard ROWE
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

ANNEX

Statement made on 26 February 1994 by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia concerning the massacre of Palestinians in Hebron

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, Senator Gareth Evans, said today that the Government of Australia was deeply shocked and saddened by the massacre of 53 Palestinians by an Israeli settler in a mosque in the West Bank town of Hebron.

He said that Australia condemned without reservation this senseless slaughter of unarmed worshippers, which threatened to prolong the seemingly endless cycle of conflict and violence between Israelis and Palestinians.

"The Australian Government extends its profound sympathy to all of those who have been bereaved or wounded by this outrageous act", he said.

Mr. Evans said that it was particularly important at this time that Israelis and Palestinians alike exercise the utmost restraint to avoid further bloodshed. "During this Muslim holy month of Ramadan, heightened religious emotion will understandably compound the sense of outrage many Palestinians will feel over this act of insanity", he said.

Mr. Evans said that Australia welcomed the strong and unqualified statement by the Israeli Prime Minister and his Government condemning the attack, "but this tragic event points to the responsibility of Israel, as the occupying Power in Gaza and the West Bank, to protect everyone who lives there".

He said that retaliatory attacks and revenge killings would only reinforce the position of those who seek to reject attempts to establish a peaceful resolution to the Israel/Palestinian conflict, and that it was of vital importance that such acts of violence should not be permitted to further the cause of extremism.

He said that the Government of Australia hoped that the tragedy would inject a new sense of urgency into the negotiations between Israel and the PLO on withdrawal by the Israel Defence Force from Gaza and Jericho and that "both sides have an obligation to proceed to negotiate this agreement without further delay so that the way can be cleared for Palestinian self-rule in the territories".

He said that the Government of Australia believed that only through the full implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements could there be any hope for a just and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinian people.

"We call on both Israel and the PLO to intensify and accelerate their efforts to implement the declaration", he said.